

Thomas Jefferson to William Eustis, January 14, 1809 , from The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes. Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester Ford.

TO DOCTOR WILLIAM EUSTIS J. MSS.

Washington, January 14, 1809. Sir, —I have the pleasure to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of December the 24th, and of the resolutions of the republican citizens of Boston, of the 19th of that month. These are worthy of the ancient character of the sons of Massachusetts, and of the spirit of concord with her sister States, which, and which alone, carried us successfully through the revolutionary war, and finally placed us under that national government, which constitutes the safety of every part, by uniting for its protection the powers of the whole. The moment for exerting these united powers, to repel the injuries of the belligerents of Europe, seems likely to be pressed upon us. They have interdicted our commerce with nearly the whole world. They have declared it shall be carried on with such places, in such articles, and in such measure only, as they shall dictate; thus prostrating all the principles of right which have hitherto protected it. After exhausting the cup of forbearance and conciliation to its dregs, we found it necessary, on behalf of that commerce, to take time to call it home into a state of safety, to put the towns and harbors which carry it on into a condition of defence, and to make further preparation for enforcing the redress of its wrongs, and restoring it to its rightful freedom. This required a certain measure of time, which, although not admitting specific limitation, must, from its avowed objects, have been obvious to all; and the progress actually made towards the accomplishment of these objects, proves it now to be near its term. While thus endeavoring to secure, and preparing to vindicate that commerce, the absurd opinion has been propagated, that this temporary and necessary arrangement was to be a permanent

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system, and was intended for its destruction. The sentiments expressed in the paper you were so kind as to enclose to me, show that those who have concurred in them have judged with

more candor the intentions of their government, and are sufficiently aware of the tendency of the excitements and misrepresentations which have been practised on this occasion. And such, I am persuaded, will be the disposition of the citizens of Massachusetts at large, whenever truth can reach them. Associated with her sister States in a common government, the fundamental principle of which is, that the will of the majority is to prevail, sensible that, in the present difficulty, that will has been governed by no local interests or jealousies, that, to save permanent rights, temporary sacrifices were necessary, that these have fallen as impartially on all, as in a situation so peculiar they could be made to do, she will see in the existing measures a legitimate and honest exercise of the will and wisdom of the whole. And her citizens, faithful to themselves and their associates, will not, to avoid a transient pressure, yield to the seductions of enemies to their independence, foreign or domestic, and take a course equally subversive of their well-being, as of that of their brethren. The approbation expressed by the republican citizens of the town of Boston, of the course pursued by the national government, is truly consoling to its members; and, encouraged by the declaration of the continuance of their confidence, and by the assurance of their support, they will continue to pursue the line of their high duties according to the best of their understandings, and with undeviating regard to the good of the whole. Permit me to avail myself of this occasion of tendering you personally the assurances of my great esteem and respect.¹

¹ Jefferson wrote later to Dr. Eustis:

“ Monticello, Oct. 6, 09.

“Dear Sir:—Solicited by a poor man in an adjoining county who states his case in the enclosed letter, & truly, as far as I can learn, I take the liberty of putting it under cover

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to you in the hope you will be so good as to put it into the hands of the proper clerk that whatever is right may be done, & if nothing can be done, that the clerk may certify the grounds, so as to inform the applicant & put him rest. The paper, if inclosed to me, shall be safely conveyed to him.

“I am glad of an occasion of congratulating you as well as my country on your accession to a share in the direction of our executive councils. Besides the general advantages we may promise ourselves from the employment of your talents & integrity in so important a station, we may hope peculiar effect from it towards restoring deeply wounded amity between your native state & her sisters. The design of the leading Federalists, then having direction of the state, to take advantage of the first war with England to separate the N. E. states from the union has distressingly impaired our future confidence in them. In this, as in all other cases, we must do them full justice, and make the fault all their own, should the last hope of human liberty be destined to receive it's final stab from them. I salute you with great esteem & respect.